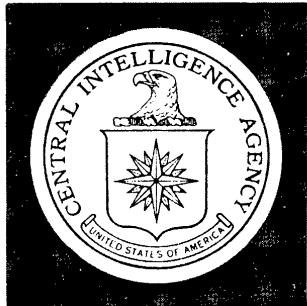


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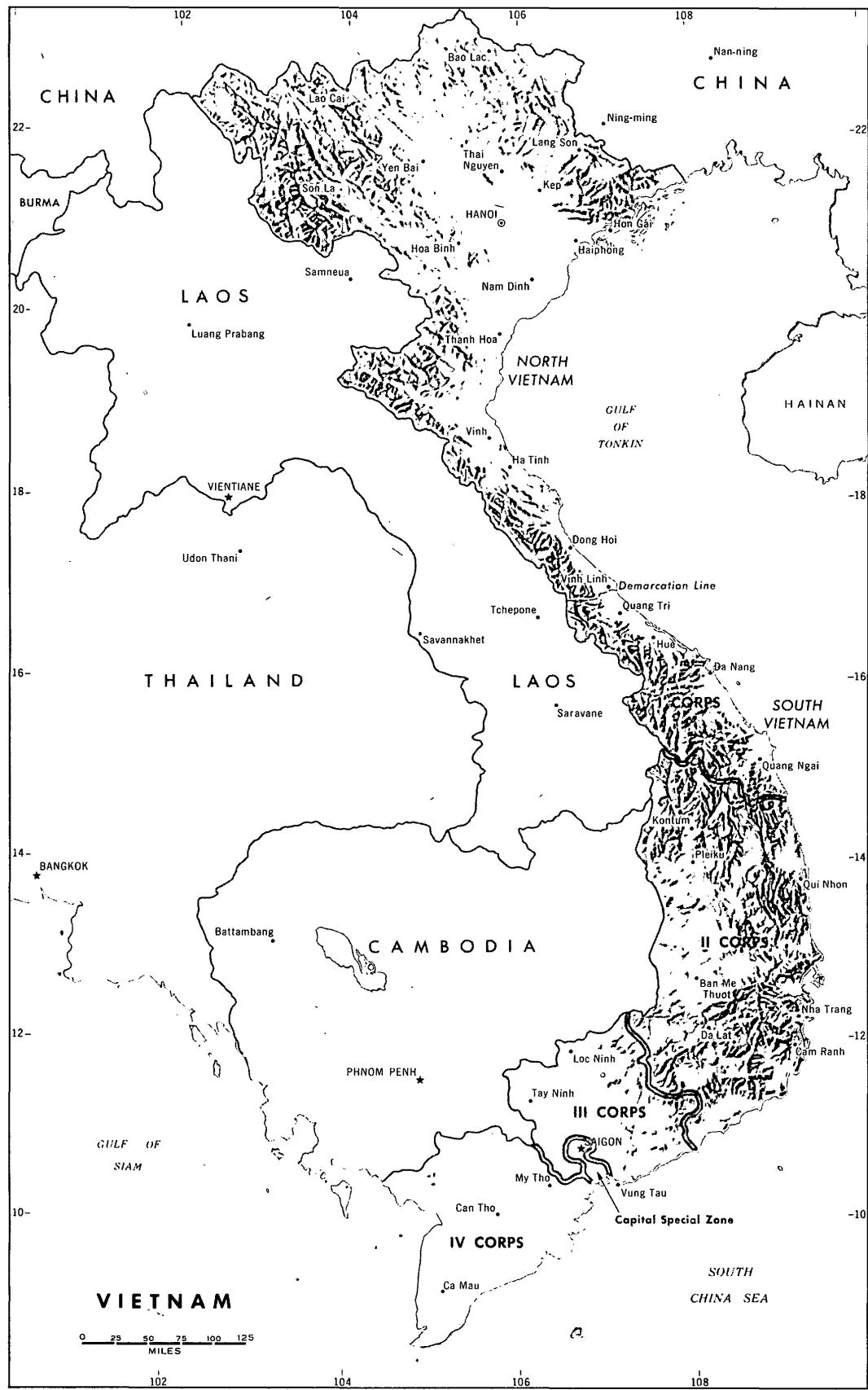


The President's Daily Brief

21 March 1969



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22 March 1969

LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF
OF 21 MARCH 1969

There have been no significant new developments overnight.

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

VIETNAM

As Hanoi reviews the results of the past month's offensive, even those leaders with lesser expectations must be dissatisfied with the generally ineffective military performance of their forces, especially over the last two weeks.

The Saigon government and the South Vietnamese people have taken the offensive in stride, no significant differences have cropped up among the allies, and the impact on the outside world has probably been less than the Communists wanted. The failure of the offensive to bring about any kind of movement in the situation, either in South Vietnam or in Paris, is probably a source of considerable frustration to Hanoi.

In particular, the North Vietnamese are undoubtedly puzzled by the measured US reaction to attacks against the cities and actions in the DMZ which run against the "understanding" on the bombing halt. The Communists probably not only calculated that some form of US military retaliation was likely, but also believed that such a response would work to their advantage by once again heating up the pressures on the US to make political concessions in order to end the war.

Disappointment with the offensive may be tempered, however, by a belief that widespread coordinated attacks are demonstrating that Communist forces still constitute a serious threat.

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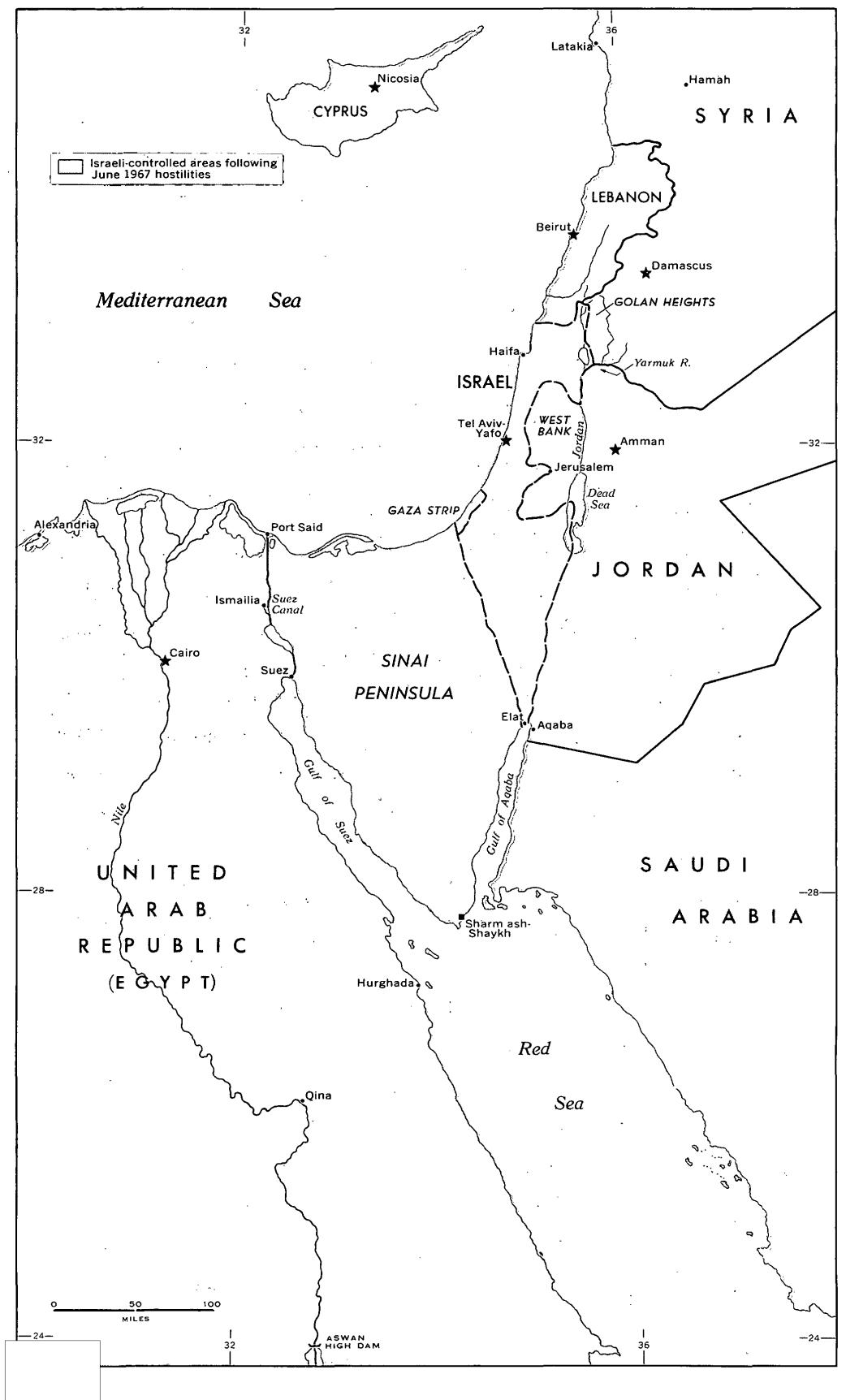
The North Vietnamese to our knowledge have not yet reacted to the current US bid for private talks. This reluctance may be only an attempt to play hard to get, but it could also point to disagreement or uncertainty in Hanoi about how to proceed in Paris. The military situation in the South provides ample reason both for disagreement and uncertainty. All the evidence at present indicates that the Communists intend to drag out the offensive for some time yet, certainly into April. Even if private talks are opened relatively soon, the Communists are unlikely to alter these plans.

EUROPE

SOVIET AFFAIRS

The East Germans, perhaps at Soviet prodding, have stopped obstructing traffic between Berlin and West Germany and apparently have even made the procedures for

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processing the traffic less onerous.

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